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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

REVIEW OF THE REPORT BY THE SECRETARIAT ON ITS ACTIVITIES IN ASSISTING DEVELOPING COUNTRY PARTIES IN THE PREPARATION OF REPORTS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

Note by the secretariat

Addendum

1. By its decisions 5/COP.2 and 11/COP.1 on procedures for the communication of information regarding measures taken for implementation of the Convention and provisions for the review of the status of implementation, the Conference of the Parties requested the secretariat to report to it during the third session on activities undertaken by the secretariat in assisting developing country Parties in the preparation of reports on the implementation of the Convention.

2. The secretariat received requests from various African countries for assistance to enable them to meet their obligations with respect to reporting to the Conference of the Parties at its third session on the status of implementation of the Convention. Similar requests were received from the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), seeking technical and financial support for the preparation of reports on implementation of the Convention by their respective member States, and also preparation of the subregional reports on implementation of the Convention in compliance with decision 11/COP.1, paragraph 10(b).

3. The secretariat consequently convened a consultative planning meeting with representatives of these subregional organizations in Geneva on 25-26 January 1999. The meeting was aimed at articulating the needs, be they financial, technical or otherwise, of the African countries in assessing the progress of implementation of the Convention since its adoption. Moreover, the subregional organizations had in view the objective, through the preparatory process of drawing up national reports on implementation, to establish a suitable framework at the country level for the future process of reporting to the sessions of the Conference of the Parties as required by the Convention.

4. An added advantage of this analytical process of evaluating the progress of implementation of the Convention was that it helped to strengthen the capacity of the national coordinating bodies so as to enable them to fulfil their respective mandates. The overall goal was to prepare comprehensive reports from the African countries affected by drought and desertification, and to provide the Conference of the Parties with sufficient information for them to make concrete recommendations as appropriate. It was also expected that the process set in motion would contribute to the establishment of mechanisms for participatory assessment of the implementation of the Convention within the national action programme process.

5. The secretariat sought the collaboration of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Observatory of the Sahara and Sahel (OSS), and experts from the African subregional organizations, in preparing a help guide to be used by the affected countries in compiling their national reports (ICCD/COP(3)/INF.3). The purpose of this help guide was to assist the Parties to the Convention in preparing their first national reports on implementation of the Convention. The help guide was designed to provide the UNCCD national focal points who would coordinate the preparation of the national reports, as well as others involved in the process, with useful information to assist them in the collection, compilation, analysis and presentation of data and information, in line with decision 11/COP.1.

6. The help guide contained background information and explained the procedures for the communication of information and review of implementation of the Convention, a proposed methodology and possible process to follow which would be adapted to suit the particular needs of each country Party, as well as an outline and explanation of the specific guidelines provided by decision 11/COP.1. The help guide was therefore expected to be adapted by the national coordinating bodies to the particularities and requirements of each national context. It could also serve as a tool for monitoring and evaluating progress made in combating land degradation within the broad context of achieving sustainable development.

7. To reinforce this process, the secretariat in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme supported the convening of a consultative meeting of the subregional organization representatives in Nairobi on 22-23 February 1999, with the objective of charting out the ways and means to provide technical and catalytic financial support to the affected countries in preparing their national reports on implementation of the Convention. On this occasion, moreover, the experts from the subregional organizations also reviewed and refined the help guide.

8. The secretariat solicited the requisite financial resources for supporting the preparation of national reports, from various partners, and positive responses were received from the Governments of Belgium, Finland, Italy, Japan and Switzerland, the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the United Nations Development Programme and the International Fund for Agricultural Development. Other partners were involved through technical support which they channelled directly to the governments concerned at the national level.

9. The amounts utilized by the secretariat by 7 July were as follows:

Belgium	US$ 46,000
Finland	US$ 55,392
Italy	US$ 60,000
Japan	US$ 80,000
Switzerland	US$ 80,536
UNEP	US$ 160,000
WMO	US$ 9,740
Total	**US$ 491,668**

10. The subregional organizations embarked on coordination of the preparation of national reports of their respective member States. They requested the secretariat to facilitate the organization of planning workshops where the national focal points would be involved in designing the process of elaboration of the national reports.

11. Consequently, the secretariat, in collaboration with UNITAR, UNEP, UNDP, OSS, CILSS and ECOWAS, IGAD, SADC and AMU, organized a series of planning and briefing workshops on the formulation of the national reports. These consultative brainstorming sessions were held with the various UNCCD national focal points, the subregional organization representatives and the consultants who had been selected to assist with the preparation of reports, with the following schedule: on 15-16 March 1999, for the southern Africa subregion; on 18-19 March 1999 for the eastern Africa subregion; on 18-19 March for the northern Africa subregion, and on 22-23 March 1999 for the western Africa subregion. The aim of these planning and briefing consultations was to help broaden the constituency of actors in this process, and to sharpen the focus of a cadre of officials who were to be directly involved in report preparation, while at the same time strengthening the capacity of the national coordinating bodies to respond to the issues pertaining to the requirements of the Conference of the Parties in this respect.

12. In compliance with requests from the countries, and in keeping with the requirements of the Convention, the services of national and subregional consultants were engaged through the subregional organizations. The consultants were required to work with the respective UNCCD focal points in supporting the preparation of reports.

13. In addition, and upon request from the countries, the organization of national workshops was supported. In these workshops, the draft national report was presented to the members of the national coordinating body, to be enlarged if needed by officials of the government and other interested actors.

14. Similar support was also extended to countries that are not members of the subregional organizations but that requested assistance from the secretariat, including Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Madagascar, Rwanda, and Sao Tome and Principe. Consultants were also engaged to assist the national coordinating bodies in these country Parties to draft their national reports.

15. The approach used, to prepare a help guide and work with the subregional organizations and the national focal points, has proven to be well adapted to the African context and has resulted in the preparation and submission of 39 national reports from affected African country Parties within a short period of time.

16. The analytical process provided a first opportunity for groups of national and subregional experts who are involved in coordinating the implementation of the Convention to reflect on and evaluate the UNCCD process, thus gaining experience while at the same time assessing the progress and constraints in UNCCD implementation.

17. One recommendation to the African country Parties is to regard this first national report as a baseline and continue to evaluate continuously the UNCCD process in a critical manner so as to be able to formulate a better national report in 2001.

18. The non-African country Parties have the opportunity to evaluate the help guide and adapt it to their specific regional circumstances in the preparation of their first national reports on the implementation of the UNCCD in 2000.